

Minutes of Special Meeting of August 24, 2010

One Twin Pines Lane, Belmont, CA

CALL TO ORDER 7:10 P.M.

ROLL CALL

COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT: Feierbach, Wozniak, Braunstein, Lieberman

COUNCILMEMBERS ABSENT: Warden

Staff Present: Acting City Manager/Community Development Director de Melo, Human Resources Director Dino, Police Chief Mattei, City Treasurer Violet, City Clerk Cook

PUBLIC/COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mayor Wozniak announced that most Belmont schools were now open for the new school year, and she urged residents to drive carefully. She also announced Movie Night in the Park to be held on August 27th, and that there would be a disaster preparedness workshop on September 18th.

HIGH SPEED RAIL UPDATE

Community Development Director de Melo stated that the High Speed Rail (HSR) Authority recently announced that a decision had been made that high speed rail would be constructed as an aerial structure for the Peninsula portion of the project, as it is the least expensive option. He noted that some cities have sent letters in objection. He stated that the right-of-way and height needs for the aerial option need to be refined. He noted that a draft resolution of Belmont's position on high speed rail was provided for consideration. He explained that the Council's previous allocation of \$10,000 towards its efforts on high speed rail has nearly been exhausted, and other sources of monies are available for further efforts, including the Council contingency fund.

Community Development Director de Melo provided some background and history of the high speed rail project to date, as well as a schedule of the draft and final Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The EIR needs to address the Pacheco Pass versus the Altamont Pass options. He noted that the Pacheco option has been determined to be the most viable route, although this is being challenged.

Mayor Wozniak explained that many people believe that the Altamont Pass is a better option, but it has not been studied in any detail.

Community Development Director de Melo described the right-of-way needs for both the construction and the finished project in Belmont, and noted that private property will be impacted.

Discussion ensued regarding project width and private properties that could be affected along the Belmont corridor.

Mayor Wozniak stated that the HSR Authority considered only the lowest cost option, and cities have been advised that they need to pay for any upgrades they desire.

Community Development Director de Melo described the trench option and noted that it could eliminate mass and hide visual impediments, as well as address noise and other aesthetic issues. He noted that neither the deep tunnel nor stacked options are under consideration, due to cost. Mayor Wozniak added that the stacked design is not under consideration anywhere in the Bay Area.

Community Development Director de Melo provided information regarding the distance between support columns, which would vary based on geotechnical issues and grade variations.

Councilmember Feierbach stated that landscaping should be addressed in the resolution, and architecture and aesthetics are important considerations.

Community Development Director de Melo stated that the HSR Authority has not made any reimbursement to Belmont for any expenses to date, nor has it made any commitments for any option beyond the aerial structure.

Mayor Wozniak stated that when voters passed Measure 1A in support of high speed rail, the ballot measure did not include details such as alignment, or design options.

George Burgess, Belmont Chamber of Commerce, outlined a recent conference hosted by Congresswoman Jackie Speier wherein loans for small businesses were discussed. He noted that banks have stimulus monies but are under scrutiny. He stated that the Chamber of Commerce wants to be available to help businesses displaced by high speed rail.

Andy Chow, Redwood City resident, expressed opposition to the proposed resolution. He described the impact of the grade separation project on his Belmont business. He expressed concerns regarding the engineering needs for the high speed rail project, and the impact to Belmont Creek and the adjacent businesses. He suggested that cities fight to get the best design.

Tom Paine, Burlingame resident, commended the City Council for addressing this issue. He noted that the underground option has been recommended for the cities of San Francisco and San Jose, and noted that two members of the High Speed Rail Authority are from those cities. He expressed hope that other cities will assert the power of people. He noted this project affects well being and quality of life. He expressed support for the resolution.

Susan Castner-Paine, Burlingame resident, stated she has been following the Peninsula Cities Consortium. She noted that people need to be engaged and informed. She explained that the high speed rail project is the equivalent of five freeway lanes, widening to eight lanes at each station. She expressed support for the proposed ad hoc committee and the proposed resolution.

C. Duff Lowes, Belmont resident, described his experience with the noise associated with high speed rail while living in Japan. He noted that there is noise even with electrification. He expressed concern for any solution other than a covered trench. He noted that sound walls push

the sound elsewhere. He expressed concern for quality of life and decreased property values. He does not support high speed rail.

Dan Anderson, Belmont resident, expressed support for an East Bay route. He stated that the existing Cal Train right-of-way is antiquated, and he noted that current and future growth is to the east. He stated that the purpose of high speed rail is for the benefit of future generations, and is not needed on the Peninsula.

Mary Morrissey-Parden, Redwood City resident, stated that she understood Proposition 1A was intended to support connections, not to benefit Cal Train. She commented that the subsequent Memorandum of Understanding did not reflect provisions of Proposition 1A. She expressed concern regarding the loss of parking at the Cal Train station. She noted that regional efforts are needed regarding this matter, and there is a need to fund better alternatives. She expressed concern regarding blight.

Gladwyn D'Souza, Belmont resident, stated that most rail solutions do not benefit Belmont. The existing Cal Train is under-utilized. High speed rail is not going to stop in Belmont. He supports the proposed resolution, and expressed concern that San Francisco and San Jose are benefitting from better solutions.

Consideration of a Resolution Supporting a Cut and Cover Trench Alignment for the Rail Segment Within Belmont

Councilmember Braunstein stated that a cut and cover option without stacking does not make sense. He expressed the need for Belmont to advocate for what it really wants. He expressed support for a stacked option. He noted that high speed rail is inevitable. He does not support the cut and cover or aerial options.

Councilmember Lieberman expressed support for high speed rail at lower speeds on the existing track. He stated there are costs associated with this project beyond financial, and that it will be disruptive. He noted that Europe runs its high speed rail at lower speeds within cities. He expressed a desire that the proposed resolution include positive language rather than negative, and would prefer to outline why the cut and cover is a better option. He expressed concern regarding aesthetics. There is a need to influence the process on what is best for Belmont. He noted that the visual renderings are helpful.

ACTION: Councilmember Feierbach made a motion to continue this matter until all five Councilmembers are present.

Mayor Wozniak stated that Belmont is one of five cities involved in the Peninsula Cities Consortium (PCC), which has been meeting for 18 months on this issue. She stated she has no faith that Belmont will get anything it wants with regard to high speed rail. She stated that the proposed resolution is needed. She does not support any above-ground solution, and there is a need to find the best solution for Belmont. She noted that population growth is not taking place on the Peninsula, and she questioned the expenditure of money on a project that will destroy cities. She stated that the East Bay and the Altamont Pass route is the best option. She recommended rewriting the resolution to express what Belmont wants. She clarified that the

HSR Authority never provided any information other than that for an above-ground solution. She expressed the need for Belmont to continue to participate in the process. She commented that the PCC's goal is to do the project right.

Councilmember Lieberman expressed his support for a resolution that addresses a cut and cover option, as it is better than the aerial option. There is a need to analyze cut and cover.

Council concurred to continue this item.

Discussion Regarding the Ad Hoc High Speed Rail Subcommittee

Mayor Wozniak stated that it is not critical to have representation from each commission on the ad hoc committee, especially if more at-large membership is desired.

Community Development Director de Melo stated that the Finance Commission has selected its member. He concurred that a cross-section of the community is important.

Mayor Wozniak recommended that the ad hoc meetings be well publicized and open to the public.

Council concurred to increase the number of at-large members if there is interest.

Discussion and Direction Regarding Additional Funding Allocation for High Speed Rail Efforts

Mayor Wozniak expressed a need to allocate funds for the ad hoc Committee's efforts.

Community Development Director de Melo stated that funding should not be a barrier to performing this work. He noted that the majority of expenditure to date has been staff time, and the previously-allocated \$10,000 has been expended. He noted that other projects being worked on by staff will be placed on hold in order to work on high speed rail.

Councilmember Feierbach expressed concern regarding the ending fund balance of the General Fund, and noted that the amount of staff time spent on this project is excessive. She supports using redevelopment agency monies for high speed rail.

Councilmember Lieberman expressed concern with using redevelopment agency funds, and recommended an allocation of General Fund monies. He also expressed interest in receiving information regarding what other projects are being affected due to the reallocation of staff time to high speed rail.

Mayor Wozniak noted that other cities have spent considerable funds on high speed rail to date.

Discussion Regarding Options on Photo Renderings and Story Poles for Proposed Aerial High Speed Rail Alignment along the Belmont Corridor

Community Development Director de Melo stated that story poles could be erected, but he noted that there would be a cost associated with this.

Mayor Wozniak expressed a desire to see an aerial overlay over the existing right-of-way. There is a need to obtain the dimensions of the existing rail line. She stated that this is something the ad hoc committee could look into.

Councilmember Lieberman stated that the photo rendering is more helpful than story poles. More input is needed from the public.

Lenore Griffin, Belmont Chamber of Commerce, suggested obtaining a rendering of the cut and trench option. There is a need to illustrate the impact on surrounding businesses. She expressed concern regarding the noise associated with high speed rail.

Councilmember Lieberman suggested that the Chamber of Commerce can help with outreach to the affected business community.

David Long, Central Neighborhood Association, stated that the neighborhood associations would like to have a voice regarding this matter, and they could help disseminate information.

Dan Anderson, Belmont resident, expressed concerns regarding noise. He noted that the Peninsula is more densely populated than the east bay.

Kristin Mercer, Belmont resident/Planning Commissioner, thanked all the speakers for their comments. She concurred that many issues about this project have not been addressed, nor have all options been considered. She noted that the Belmont City Council is doing its due diligence, but the HSR Authority is not.

ADJOURNMENT at this time, being 9:30 P.M.

Terri

Cook
City Clerk

Meeting Tape Recorded and Videotaped
Audio Recording 767